

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT  
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE RALEIGH NC  
800 AM EDT MON MAR 05 2012

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SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK IN NORTH CAROLINA  
MARCH 04 - MARCH 10  
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This week has been declared North Carolina's Severe Weather Awareness week for 2012.

Today we will define a severe thunderstorm.

...Severe Thunderstorms...

The term severe thunderstorm refers to a thunderstorm producing hail that is at least 1 inch in diameter, wind gusts to 58 mph or greater, a tornado, or any combination of the three. Although wind gusts weaker than 58 mph can cause minor damage to trees and other outdoor objects, significant wind damage is typically caused by wind gusts of 58 mph or greater. Although lightning can be deadly, the NWS doesn't use it to define a severe thunderstorm. If it did, every thunderstorm would be severe by definition. Also, excessive rainfall may lead to deadly flash flooding, but heavy rain is not a severe thunderstorm criterion either. The flood threat during thunderstorms is handled through a separate set of watches and warnings from your local NWS forecast office.

Over the last ten years there have been over 7000 reports of large hail and damaging wind statewide resulting in over fifty million dollars in damage. Thunderstorms have also been responsible for a number of injuries and even deaths in the state resulting from lightning, high wind and tornadoes. The severe thunderstorm season in central North Carolina typically starts in March and does not end until late in the fall. Some of the most damaging storms occur from March through early July.

In 2011, warnings issued by National Weather Service continued to provide an average of 19 minutes lead time for severe wind and hail, with detection rate of ninety percent. The receipt of accurate and timely warnings is a vital part of any severe weather plan raising awareness when a significant threat is present.

...Large Hail...

In the last 5 years severe thunderstorms in North Carolina have produced severe damaging hail from the size of hen eggs to baseballs across the piedmont and eastern North Carolina. While hail is not usually life threatening, these large chunks of ice cause serious damage to roofs, siding, windows, automobiles, and crops. The large hail season in central North Carolina typically runs from March through early July, typically peaking in May.

### ...Damaging Wind...

Severe gusts of wind from a thunderstorm called downbursts or straight line winds are a serious danger. Nationally, over the last 30 years, nearly as many people have been killed by straight winds as from tornadoes. Thunderstorm wind gusts rush down from the storm sometimes reaching speeds in excess of 100 mph. Thunderstorm winds of this magnitude often effect large areas creating widespread damage and injuries from flying debris. Straight line winds can cause damage equivalent to that of a tornado. Damaging wind events in North Carolina typically start in March and last into September, with a peak in activity from May through early August.

### ...Safety...

You can protect yourself during thunderstorms by remembering this phrase - hide from the wind and lightning. Stay away from windows when storms approach and seek shelter in an interior bathroom or closet when the wind really starts to blow. Your best line of defense against severe thunderstorms is to stay informed. Listen to NOAA weather radio, television or local radio for the latest forecasts and possible threat of thunderstorms and severe weather. If warnings are issued, take action and protect your family and property. Being safe is a lot better than being sorry.